

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF LEROY GARDNER BEFORE DMHAS AND DPH
BUDGET HEARING COMMITTEE
February 15, 2013**

My name is Leroy Gardner, I live in Norwich, CT. I had to get up at 6:00 A.M. in order to begin the 5 Hour Bus Trip that was necessary to arrive up here to the Capitol on time. I had to make a series of bus transfers all the way from the Southeastern Corner of Connecticut, through several towns and counties assure (primarily) that my name was submitted today as a Public Speaker,(and secondly)I took such an arduous trip with the slim hopes of maybe(just maybe)being able to "corner" one of the Committee Members for a more detailed, personal conversation.

Based on these opening remarks alone, many would think that this has earned me perhaps some additional consideration (some additional times perhaps) at least, something, beyond the already standard courtesy that these Panels usually give anyway to Speakers. However, again, as I said, because I live in Norwich, the Southeastern Corner of Connecticut, or more infamously perceived by we inhabitants, as the "Forgotten Corner" of Connecticut, I take it as a given, the additional lengths to which I must go beyond the norm , in order for my issues and concerns to be given any regard. Particularly, at is seems to me, unfortunately, when the issues and concerns that I want to present deal with the under reported, (yet often occurring) circumstances of DMHAS\DPH Clients not getting adequate legal assistance with Non-Criminal Court Issues(i.e. **Community Rights, Housing, Psychiatric Inpatient Hospital Issues**, and a large cross section of other **Laws and Policies to Protect Clients' Rights**).

Yet, amazingly one little agency, the **CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.(CLRP)** with its already limited budget and small staff, does manage to somehow reach as many DMHAS/DPH Clients as they can, and in as many areas of Connecticut, as they can, even in the "Forgotten Corner" of Southeastern Connecticut,. On many occasions, I've personally seen how even "high-ranking members" of that agency commit gestures (typically unheard of by other "Legal Agencies")such as rearranging their fixed schedules, if a more immediate, impromptu hearing demands their presence elsewhere.

So, yes, I imagine many might have initially wondered to themselves, after hearing my opening remarks, what could've possessed this gentleman to go through all of what he did to get here today. Well, I hope, I answered that, when I cited just that one example CLRP's actions, and how it has both inspired me to show concern for others, as well as to do whatever I can to see their agency continue the incredible work they do. Hopefully, you are also able to see that I am not merely speaking of resolving legal issues, but more uniquely, they achieved (in me especially) and possibly some other "DMHAS/DPH Client", the incredible feat of inspiring new attitudes and character behavior, the sort of which, that would have taken probably months, and months of more expensive state dollars to achieve. Now that's I what I call truly getting more bang for your buck, and isn't that why we're here today, after all.

I ask that CLRP's Budget not be cut(and if possible, actually increased) so that they can have sufficient enough staff to cover the vast Geographic Territory that is Connecticut, with the accompanying travel costs that are a part of this. Furthermore, allow this agency to maintain an adequate Administrative Support Staff and Offices to coordinate the monumental logistics of carrying out the massive caseloads their small staff must handle.

In closing, the only accomplishment, I think I can realistically hope with just this brief presence before this committee today, is that you too become inspired by my sacrifices today, and emulate me, in some regard, by taking just a little extra time yourselves, in researching and gathering more information before you make any planned cuts to the budget of this much needed agency, **THE CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.**